

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 KUWAIT 004380

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [I2](#) [IR](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAQ](#) [RELATIONS](#)

SUBJECT: A VIEW FROM THE KUWAIT/IRAQ BORDER, FROM NAVISTAR
TO UMM QASR

REF: A. KUWAIT 3331

[B](#). PHOTOS ON EMBASSY KUWAIT WEBSITE

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (a), (b), and
(d)

[1](#). (U) Please see para 10 for action request of all
addressees.

[2](#). (U) The references in this cable are photographs which
are posted on Embassy Kuwait's classified website. Please
visit <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/> and click on
the "Kuwait/Iraq Border Pictures" link in the Picture Gallery
box on the left hand side of the page in order to view photos.

[3](#). (C) Summary and Comment. On September 18, a five member
party of Embassy staff, joined by State's visiting Kuwait
desk officer, traveled to the Kuwait-Iraq border for a
first-hand look at the Kuwaiti construction of a border
barrier pipe which led to a violent Iraqi demonstration at
Umm Qasr on July 25 (ref A). The trip took place with
Ministry of the Interior (MOI) border police escorts using
advance and follow vehicles with machine guns in modified
turrets in the beds of the trucks. The Assistant Manager for
Northern Borders, Lt. Col. Fahed Salem Al-Ajmi, gave
Political officer and the Office of Military Cooperation
Kuwait (OMC-K) Joint Intelligence advisor a personal brief of
the contentious areas between the 87th border pillar to the
105th border pillar, as demarcated by the United Nations.
While Iraqi farms clearly extend into Kuwaiti territory, no
obvious attempts have been made to harvest any crop and the
land, for the most part, lies fallow and dry (photos 11 and
12). According to Al-Ajmi, the farmers have said they would
rather lose their heads than their land. There have been no
fruitful negotiations between the border police elements and
the local Iraqi populace on the topic of compensation for
lost lands, although the GOK has repeatedly stated that they
have funds available (deposited with the U.N.) for the
express purpose of compensating Iraqis for lands lost when
the area was last demarcated in 1992. Even though the Basrah
province has been relatively calm, tensions in the area have
begun to rise and Post is keeping a close eye to see if the
border will, once again, become a point of violent contention
in the near future. (Note. Post will deliver border maps of
the entire border region, to both the U.N. and the GOK
shortly. The border maps, produced within the past 45 days,
are in response to a request by the U.N. for an overview of
the area before a U.N. team visits the border later this
month. End Summary and Comment.

Looking Into Iraq

[4](#). (SBU) Two political officers, accompanied by DOS desk
officer for Kuwait, OMC-K's operations officer, and OMC-K's
joint intelligence advisor, traveled to the Kuwait-Iraq
border at the Navistar Coalition crossing to observe the
current Kuwaiti construction of a border pipe marker (photos
7 and 17). The pipe marker is being built parallel to the
border pillars (photos 13 and 16), offset southward by 2
meters, and when finished will extend from marker 106 at the
old harbor, south of Umm Qasr, traveling westward around to
the southern border with Saudi Arabia. The Embassy party met
up with Lt. Col. Fahed Al-Ajmi, Assistant Manager for
Northern Borders, who has had several postings along the
northern border since 1992. His accompanying aide has been
in the area since 1993. The party traveled with armed escort
which included two machine guns mounted in pickup trucks, two
camouflage SUVs running lead and follow and a Criminal
Investigative Department vehicle which joined us for the
portion closest to Umm Qasr.

[5](#). (SBU) The border itself is delineated on the Kuwaiti side
by a double set of electrical fencing with barbed wire atop,
followed a kilometer later by a 4X4 meter dry trench (photos
1 and 2), and finally with the pipe border marker two meters
from the border pillars themselves. Additionally, Al-Ajmi
pointed out what he called "witnesses", short pieces of pipe,
less than a meter high, located on either side of the border
pillars at a distance of 10 meters, designed to show which
direction the border lay (photo 22). Between border pillars
87 and 105, a number of these "witnesses" were either missing

or unseen as they were buried under sand and dirt. The construction of the pipe has raised rumors in the border region of Iraq that it is actually a pipeline, removing oil from Iraqi lands. The pipe is hollow and is cut into segments. Each segment is 5 meters long and has a gap of a few centimeters between one and the next. This was done, according to Al-Ajmi, to accommodate the expansion and contraction of the metal under different climatic conditions.

16. (C) The trip began just west of the Navistar Coalition crossing, adjacent to border pillar 89 (photo 3). Within a minute's drive west along the border, the outline of an Iraqi farm could be clearly seen from the Kuwaiti access road, jutting south into Kuwait (photos 5 and 7). The farm in question is on either side of pillar 88 and Lt. Col. Al Ajmi stated that the Iraqi farmer often verbally harassed his men while the farmer's teenage son threw rocks at the convoy trucks parked on the other side of the trench, near Navistar. The farmhouse itself was extremely run-down but it did have, as many others we saw, a satellite dish on its roof.

17. (C) Fifty meters before the farm house jutted out into the access road, the Iraqi farmer had laid down a row of large rocks in an attempt to block further access to the road (photo 6). Again, Al-Ajmi commented that this was common but at least "they are not mortars" this time around. According to Al-Ajmi, in the spring of 2004 the border police lost an officer on the same stretch of road to a mortar round (shell) which had been placed there, in open sight, by Iraqis. The officer in question was part of an EOD team trying to disarm it when it suddenly exploded, killing him on the spot. There had been no other fatalities or injuries since that incident.

Border Markers and Witnesses

18. (SBU) At marker 88, the plaques identifying which side faces the Republic of Iraq and the State of Kuwait had been pried off, leaving a hole in their place. The witness, or directional marker, was partially visible on one side but was missing entirely on the other. Going on to 89, the border marker is protected by barbed wire laid down by U.S. forces and has plaques attached (photos 13 and 14) but no witnesses to be seen. Marker 90 actually has an Iraqi immigration building jutting all around it, with a concrete foundation that spills three meters into Kuwait. Marker 91 is at the Al-Abdaly civilian crossing point, inches from the Iraqi border chain link fence (photos 15 and 16). Al-Ajmi confided that the British authorities had advised the Iraqis to build their border fence "on the borderline itself", making it impossible for the Iraqis to have any neutral ground to work in, should they need to investigate any activity without immediately walking onto Kuwaiti territory. In the same sector the Iraqi border fence was less than two kilometers long and only covers the area used by the Iraqis for immigration and customs on the Al-Abdaly crossing. The chainlink fence is topped by barbed wire but since it ends abruptly less than a kilometer from either side of the crossing, it is not effective at stopping movement in and out of Kuwait, especially compared to the Kuwaiti system of fencing, trenches, and patrols in the same sector.

Camp Bucca

19. (S) There are two more farms that sit on both Iraqi and Kuwaiti soil, between markers 91 and 95 (photos 19 and 20). Again, the farms have been edged with mini-berms to delineate their borders but there are no crops visible in the soil within Kuwait. One of the farms was growing tomatoes on the Iraqi side, but closer to the farmhouse and away from the access road and border. Al-Ajmi commented that he always saw the Iraqi women working the fields (photo 8) but never the men. "The women do all the work and they (the men) sit, that's all," stated Al-Ajmi. The drive continued eastward and we could clearly see Camp Bucca, the U.S. military detention center, less than 3 kilometers from the border. Al-Ajmi recounted an incident the year before, in November 2004, when shots were fired by U.S. forces from Camp Bucca into the berm on the Kuwaiti side of the border. He said that he got hold of an officer at Camp Bucca and asked if the shooting could stop. The American officer (NFI) apparently responded that "they weren't shooting into Kuwait, they were recalibrating their 50 caliber machine guns by firing at the berm." Al-Ajmi pointed out that it was lucky there were no injuries as tracer fire showed the shots going over the berm and in the direction of a Kuwaiti border police post.

110. (S) Action Request. Camp Bucca is within sight of the Kuwait border. For reporting purposes, we ask that Embassy Kuwait be included on all traffic (military and non-military) as an info addressee for issues relating to Camp Bucca. The GOK is aware of its existence but does not have a clear understanding of its size and population. In order to ensure that incidents at Camp Bucca do not impact on border

security, we would ask to be kept informed of any/any relevant traffic.

Smuggling

11. (S) The land between markers 95 and 100, Al-Ajmi claimed, held the most concentrated traffic in smuggling that occurred on the northern border. Hashish smugglers, human traffickers, and small-time gun runners criss-cross the border even though there are countermeasures in place. The border police at Al Azmiya police post, 1.5 kilometers south of border marker 97, use thermal imagery technology to combat night smuggling. According to Al-Ajmi, the smugglers are allowed to get one kilometer into Kuwait before they send a patrol out to pick them up. "It lessens the chance that they can run back into Iraq," said Al-Ajmi. He reported that the largest group of border infiltrators are Iranian, followed by Iraqis. He added that he believed "most of them" to be economic refugees but added that the police are constantly on the lookout for border infiltrators, regardless of their reason to travel. (Note: Local press reports that Iranians illegally enter Kuwait via land and sea. Smugglers often 'drop' their human cargo on Bubiyan Island or close enough to a beach so that they can swim in. The Iranians are almost exclusively male and are routinely deported back to Iran after the police pick them up. End Note.)

Iraqi Farm Workers

12. (C) From border markers 98 to 104, there are another two farms which impact Kuwait but, again, they are not being used for harvesting any crop visible to the naked eye. The Iraqi population on the border is Shi'a and during our visit all farms had the distinctive green flags of the Shi'a attached to poles surrounding the Iraqi side of the farmland, to mark an upcoming Shi'a holy day. The women we saw were fully covered in abayas and all wore headscarves (hijabs). There were no cars at the farms within sight of the border but car traffic was evident in Safwan and by the Umm Qasr crossing.

Umm Qasr and Border Pillar 105

13. (C) The area where the July 25 incident took place lies between marker 104 and 105 (ref A and photos 23, 25). The GOK stopped construction of the border pipeline in that area since that date and Al-Ajmi stated that they are waiting for the UN to return so that they can proceed. According to Al-Ajmi and his aide, the demonstrators filled in the three pipeline foundation holes where they breached the border (photos 25 and 26) with material, "possibly mortar (rounds)." Al-Ajmi said that the border police removed nothing from the area and left it as the demonstrators had left it, in order to show the UN what the Iraqis had done.

14. (C) Less than half a kilometer east, we arrived at the end of the Kuwaiti access road, where cement blocks lay across the road traveling towards the gulf (photo 24). Al-Ajmi pointed to three houses farther down the road, worn down with sizable yards and vegetation surrounding them. "Those three houses lie next to and inside our border", according to Al-Ajmi, "and it is the residents of those houses that cause problems for us." As he spoke, six individuals, all in a line, began walking towards us as we stood and took photographs of the area. The six, both men and women, were speaking loudly and gesturing in our direction as they approached so we left the area at that point. Marker 105 is within the backyard of the third farthest house, not visible without binoculars. (Note: Marker 106 cannot be visited due to continuing tensions along that stretch of land. End note.)

15. (C) As we left to return to Navistar, Al-Ajmi drove us across a sand bridge just west of marker 105. As his vehicle and the embassy vehicle passed onto the secondary access road on the south side of the trench, Al-Ajmi gave the order to take out the bridge and remove that trench crossing, using a bulldozer. He explained that reestablishing the trench would ensure the Iraqis would not use that particular site to cross, noting that they would have to go wherever it was easier, perhaps closer to his police border posts where he could monitor them.

PostScript

16. (SBU) At 1100 on September 29, four masked gunmen fired gunshots into Kuwait from their vehicle. The SUV was traveling between Al-Abdaly and Navistar, heading west, when it opened fire. There were no injuries reported from the incident. However, the attack came at the same time an IED

went off outside of Safwan, killing two American soldiers.
No arrests have been made.

Visit Embassy Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

You can also access this site through the
State Department's Classified SIPRNET website

LEBARON